

Caregiver Connection

October 2008

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth in Care

In recent month there has been much discussion about groups of young people who are over-represented in the child welfare system. The primary focus of these reports has been on those children in racial and ethnic minority groups who come into care more frequently and stay in care longer than other children.

Another group of young people who enter care more frequently and stay in care longer is LGBTQ youth. These young people are more frequent victims of family violence and run away or are kicked out of their homes at higher rates than their peers. Sadly, LGBTQ youth often end up in foster care only to experience additional maltreatment from peers, community members, and even caregivers.

Foster Parents and Relative Caregivers for LGBTQ Youth

If you work with young people in child welfare system, you work with young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTQ). These young people are dealing not only with the challenges that arise from traumatic life experience and the subsequent challenges of life in foster care but also with the risk of harassment and mistreatment because they are LGBTQ. Child welfare professionals and caregivers have both the legal and ethical obligation to serve these young people with the same measure of care, compassion, and competence that they would extend to any hurting child.

Unfounded myths and negative stereotypes about LGBTQ youth continue to prevail in the community at large; there is no place for these harmful ideologies anywhere in the child welfare continuum. The first step toward competent care is to understand basic facts about those who identify as LGBTQ.

Acknowledge That Foster Youth in Your Care May Be LGBTQ

Don't assume that every young person in your care is heterosexual or comfortable in their assigned gender. Many LGBTQ young people fear the negative reactions that may come from revealing this aspect of their identity and may carefully hide that they are LGBTQ.



Examine Your Beliefs and Attitudes That Might Impact Your Ability to Support LGBTQ Youth in Your Care

Be aware of your own beliefs, prejudices and gaps in knowledge surrounding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. Regardless of your personal beliefs, remember that above all it's your responsibility to provide a safe, nurturing, and nonjudgmental environment for the LGBTQ young people in your care.

Educate Yourself about LGBTQ Issues

You don't have to be an expert or LGBTQ yourself in order to support an LGBTQ youth. There are plenty of resources available to help you better understand these issues. Seek out the support and information you need to feel comfortable engaging young people in frank and age-appropriate discussions about sexual orientation and gender identity.

Understand That Being LGBTQ Isn't a "Choice" Or Something a Young Person Can Change

The leading mental health and child welfare associations have long recognized that lesbian or gay sexual orientation is a normal variation on human sexuality and no more susceptible to change than is a heterosexual sexual orientation. A young person should never be subjected to "conversion" or "reparative" therapies for the purpose of changing his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. Such "therapies" have been shunned by national professional counseling organizations as unethical and potentially dangerous.

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Meet the Cooper-Carscadden Family

When Degale and Lisa met, both were already immersed in the world of helping kids. Degale, who was raising her son, worked for Treehouse in Seattle, helping teenage foster youth prepare for independence. Lisa had adopted her foster daughter, was teaching at the University of Washington, and preparing to become a certified Spanish teacher. The two shared similar values, and were both passionate about helping kids with complex needs. As their relationship grew so did their commitment to helping youth involved in the child welfare system. In their Seattle home they were respite caregivers and foster parents. After struggling to get resources for their own foster kids, they decided to become a "Mockingbird Family" hub home for other foster families. As a hub family, they offer resources and support to foster parents trying to get the best services for the kids in their care. The other foster families have become like extended family to the Cooper-Carscadden clan which now includes: Degale; Lisa; Michaud, Degale's son who is attending college; Lina, Lisa's adopted daughter; Shaila, an 18-year-old in foster care to 21 who is like a niece to Degale and Lisa; and Sarah, an international student. Both parents work full time and in addition to their own clan, they still provide respite care for other area foster families. When others consider foster parenting but wonder if they "have what it takes," Degale says, "There is a young life out there that needs exactly what you have to offer at that moment." The main thing they want people to know about foster parenting is, "You are making a contribution but you are also receiving a great gift. You learn; you open up your heart in different ways. We need to see 'family' in a different way." Degale and Lisa found a way to create "family" for their community, their children, and themselves.

You can too.



Did You Know It Is Election Time?

For Foster Parent Regional and Statewide Representatives

What are Regional and Statewide Foster Representatives?

The foster parent representatives attend and participate in quarterly regional and statewide meetings with CA regional and state level management to discuss, strategize and plan to strengthen services for the protection of children and improved working relationships between CA staff and foster parents.

Who is my Regional and Statewide Foster Parent Representative?

See insert on right side of the page.

How do I get more information about the Foster Parent Representative elections?

Elections for foster parent representatives will be held October or November of 2009.

Please contact your regional foster parent representative or Michael Luque' Foster Care and Kinship Care Program Manager (360) 902-7986 or email lumi300@dshs.wa.gov.

When are the Regional and Statewide Meetings?

Regional and statewide meetings are held every quarter and the next statewide meeting will be held on October 13, 2008 from 1:30 to 4:30 in Region 3 at Compass Health Building 2, Central Conference Room (Gym Room), 4526 Federal Avenue, Everett, WA 98203.

Directions are available at this link:

[http://www.compasshealth.org/
dir_everett.html](http://www.compasshealth.org/dir_everett.html)

To learn more information about regional meetings, contact your regional foster parent representative for more information.

Regional Foster Parent Representatives

REGION 1

Meegan Ware

jamesandmeegan@comcast.net
509-482-2033

Ginger Schutt

fosmom09@comcast.net
509-535-3398

REGION 2

Mary-Jeanne Smith

smithhomes@hotmail.com
509-876-6245

REGION 3

Debra Ellsworth

dkfoster3@verizon.net
360-755-0608

Shala Crow

fosterhearts@hotmail.com

REGION 4

Ruth Graham

rrg47@msn.com
206-605-0664

Tess Thomas

TMT3000@aol.com

REGION 5

Debra Converse

president@kitsapfostercare.org
360-692-1927

Debra Van Cleaves

deborahat@aol.com
253-473-9252

REGION 6

Amy Gardner

michaelamy52@msn.com
360-200-2102

Marci Miess

marcimieess@hotmail.com
360-880-5330

Do You Need Continuing Education Training Hours?

You now have the opportunity to attend a Foster Care to College Seminar (FCTC) in your area.

Foster parents may now receive continuing education training hours for successful participation and completion of the FCTC seminars. This applies to both the 6-8th and 9-12th grade seminars. Certificates will be awarded once you have successfully completed the seminar. You will then need to send your licensor a copy of the certificate in order to receive credit for the hours. The hours awarded will be hour for hour. To attend a Seminar near you, please contact the provider in your region listed below or contact Jim Pritchard @ (360) 902-8487. The seminar dates and locations can also be found www.independence.wa.gov.

REGION 1

Service Alternatives

Jen Cox (509) 325-7080

REGION 2

Catholic Family and Child Services

Laurie Riel (509) 965-7100 ext.228

REGION 3

Youthnet

Eva Ervin (360) 336-1610 ext. 1238

REGION 4

Treehouse

Erin Lawrence-Cook (206) 267-5150

REGION 5

Pierce County Alliance

Stephanie Dorens (253) 502-5400

REGION 6

Community Youth Services

Molly Robertson (360) 953-0780 ext. 156

UPDATE

Parent Child-Sibling Visits

Last month we told you about changes in policy that affect caregivers: Twice monthly visits for siblings placed apart in foster care and the requirement for parent-child visits within 72 hours of placement. A FACT sheet for caregivers who provide sibling visits is now posted on the Foster Parent Website. We have also included an example of the mileage/activity fee reimbursement form on the website. If you do not have computer access and cannot view these documents online, please contact your social worker for more information.

Post Adoption **Support**

Book Nook

Get Talking!

Adoptive Families' Guide to Talking About Adoption

Adoptive Families®

PO Box 5159

Brentwood, TN 37024

Tel: 800-372-3300

Available From:

www.adoptivefamilies.com

View Publication:

www.adoptivefamilies.com/talking

No matter how old your child is, you can be sure that adoption is something he thinks about. And what about his classmates and friends? We've compiled a list of our best resources that will help you talk to your child and other people about adoption – Clip-and-Save guides, advice on discussing sensitive details, answering your child's first questions, helping your adolescent open up, and more. (Author abstract) (from Child Welfare Information Gateway).



Did You Know?

What two factors you should consider when negotiating the Adoption Support monthly cash payment?

- Expenses that address the special needs of the child
- The circumstances of the family

As the parent you are financially responsible for the needs of your child. The extent of assistance needed by you to help meet the needs of your child is determined through discussion and negotiations between you and the adoption program staff.

The amount decided upon must not exceed the amount the child would receive if the child were in a foster family home.

Events:

The next statewide Washington State Foster Parent and Children's Administration Consultation Team meeting is October 13, 2008, from 1:30 to 4:30 pm. The location for the October 13, 2008 1624 quarterly statewide meeting from 1:30 to 4:30 in region 3 is:
Compass Health Building 2
Central Conference Room (Gym Room)
4526 Federal Avenue,
Everett, WA 98203

Regional Contacts

Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers* 509-363-3383
Pam Copeland* 509-363-3379

Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland* 509-225-6500
Carol Cyr 509-225-6531
(Financial Specialist)

Region 3 – Monroe

Steve Foster* 360-805-3032
Linda Richardson* 360-805-3030

Region 4 – Bellevue

Aaron Washington* 425-590-3072
Jenne Norris 425-590-3069
(Social Worker)

Region 5 – Tacoma

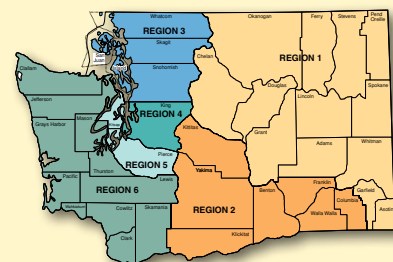
Cindy Anderson* 253-983-6359
Laura Davis* 253-983-6281

Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett* 360-725-6758
Kim Mower* 360-725-6778

Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682
(listen carefully to the recorded message)

* Adoption Support Consultants



Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County, call 206-605-0664 and in any county from Snohomish County north, call 360-510-7601 or 360-863-6530.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

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Know That Your Acceptance or Rejection Affects the Health and Well-Being of the LGBTQ Youth in Your Care

Research shows that family acceptance is an important predictor of how well an LGBTQ youth will fare as an adult. As a foster parent, don't compound the rejection an LGBTQ youth may have suffered from his or her family of origin by exhibiting the same rejecting behaviors.

Remember this, our primary responsibility is to keep young people safe and provide them with stable and supportive places to live. As child welfare professionals and substitute caregivers we each have the unique opportunity to be that one safe and supportive adult in the life of a struggling young person.

The National Foster Parent Association has adopted a formal policy urging sensitivity and support for LGBTQ youth in foster care.

The information above is provided by Lambda Legal www.lambdalegal.org (866-LGBTTeen and the Child Welfare League of America www.cwla.org (202) 638-2952.

To order free information related to LGBTQ contact Lambda Legal and Child Welfare League.

If you would like more information on this topic, contact Michael Luque at lumi300@dshs.wa.gov or 360-902-7986.

If someone you love is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, you can get more education and support at Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) at <http://community.pflag.org>

Engaging Families for Change Training

As a member of the team working together to help children and their families (along with the social worker, GAL/CASA, counselor and others), a foster parent or relative caregiver will learn strategies and tools for empowering families. This training is a commitment to come together and develop skills to effectively establishing a relationship with children, parents and other essential individuals for the purpose of sustaining healthy families that are safe for children.

Please contact your Resource Family Training Institute regional contact for more information.